

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Montpelier, Vermont**

TEAM: School Finance / Postsecondary Approvals

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant a six-month extension to the Vermont College of Fine Arts, Inc. (VCFA) of its Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority, which would otherwise expire April 30, 2010, in order to allow time for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) to complete its accreditation review?

RECOMMENDED ACTION: That the State Board of Education grant a six-month extension to the Vermont College of Fine Arts, Inc. (VCFA) of its Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority, which would otherwise expire April 30, 2010, in order to allow time for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) to complete its accreditation review.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 16 V.S.A. §176 and 176a.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The State Board of Education is responsible for issuing Certificates of Approval and Certificates of Degree-Granting Authority, or both, to applicant postsecondary schools whose objectives, programs and resources, including personnel, curriculum, finances and facilities, are found to be adequate and appropriate for the stated purpose and for the protection of students and the public interest. In-state institutions which are accredited by NEASC are exempt from the State Board's review and approval process.

The Vermont College of Fine Arts was issued a two-year Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority on April 30, 2008. The approval covers the following degree programs:

Master of Fine Arts in Writing (MFA)
Master of Fine Arts in Writing For Children (MFA)
Master of Fine Arts in Visual Art (MFA)

Because the accreditation review protocol by NEASC is considered to be thorough and complete, department staff supports the request from VCFA to not subject VCFA to a separate, simultaneous, and similar review process.

COST IMPLICATIONS: There are no fiscal impacts to the Department of Education or the state of Vermont beyond the staff time necessary to process the request and formulate this recommendation to the State Board.

STAFF AVAILABLE: Bill Talbott, Chief Financial Officer
Cathy Hilgendorf, Postsecondary Approval Coordinator

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ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant a Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority for three years, commencing January 19, 2010, to Nichols College, to award the following academic degrees: Master in Business Administration (MBA) and master in Organizational Leadership (MOL).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: That the State Board of Education grant a Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority for three years, commencing January 19, 2010, to Nichols College, to award the following academic degrees: Master in Business Administration (MBA) and Master in Organizational Leadership (MOL).

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 16 V.S.A. §176 and 176a.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The State Board of Education is responsible for issuing Certificates of Approval and Certificates of Degree-Granting Authority, or both, to applicant postsecondary schools whose objectives, programs and resources, including personnel, curriculum, finances and facilities, are found to be adequate and appropriate for the stated purpose and for the protection of students and the public interest.

After reviewing complete application materials from Nichols College, Department of Education staff agrees with the recommendation from an evaluation team from Vermont Higher Education Council (VHEC). In its report to the department dated December 14, 2009, VHEC's Committee on Accreditation and Certification recommended the three year approval for Nichols. The full report is available at our offices.

Nichols College, established in 1815 and accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) since 1965, has offered an MBA degree at its principal place of business, Dudley, Massachusetts, and online, since 1974. Both the MBA and MOL degree programs will be offered in Vermont at leased space on the campus of St. Michael's College, and they will be offered in the evening to attract part-time working adult students.

COST IMPLICATIONS: There are no fiscal impacts to the Department of Education or the state of Vermont beyond the staff time necessary to process the request and formulate this recommendation to the State Board. That cost has been partially offset by Nichols' payment to the department of \$2,500., of which \$1,500 was remitted to VHEC for its expenses related to its review of Nichols College.

STAFF AVAILABLE: Bill Talbott, Chief Financial Officer
Cathy Hilgendorf, Postsecondary Approval Coordinator